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**United Nations
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United Nations Environment Programme**

**United Nations Environment Assembly of the
United Nations Environment Programme
Third session**
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3/10. Addressing water pollution to protect and restore water-related ecosystems

The United Nations Environment Assembly,

Recognizing that water from terrestrial, coastal and marine sources is essential for human health, well-being and livelihoods, ecosystem functioning and services, and the survival of all living species,

Highly concerned about threats to water quantity and quality, in particular from pollution on both land and sea across the globe, and that water-related ecosystems sustain the impact of climate change and severe pathogen pollution, among other factors, and of human activities such as urbanization, increased industrial and agricultural activity and poor sanitation,

Conscious of the fact that water pollution, water scarcity and degradation of water-related ecosystems have a disproportionate impact on women and children,

Noting that water is both a recipient and a carrier of pollution, affecting ecosystems and human health, with impacts that are exacerbated by the effects of extreme events, including disasters, and stressing that sustainable solutions require integrated and intersectoral approaches from source to sea at all levels in order to reduce emissions and the transport of hazardous substances, and concerned that many water-related ecosystems face increased uncertainty and risks due to climate change and other factors,

Recalling the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled "The future we want", in which Heads of State and Government stressed the need to adopt measures to significantly reduce water pollution and improve wastewater treatment and the need for Governments to commit to increasing access to safe and affordable drinking water and basic sanitation,

Recalling also United Nations General Assembly resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015, entitled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", and recognizing the important role of water in attaining the Sustainable Development Goals,

Recalling further United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 2/5, on delivering on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,

Welcoming the outcome of the high-level United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development,

Recalling decision 27/3 of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme, in which the Council called for the development of international water quality guidelines for ecosystems that could be voluntarily used by countries to develop national standards, policies and

frameworks for their own water quality in order to protect and restore their significant water-related ecosystems,

Recognizing the contribution made by the Global Environment Monitoring System/Water Programme and recalling United Nations Environment Assembly resolutions 1/9, which reaffirmed the mandate of the Global Environment Monitoring System/Water Programme in its capacity-building and data management work, and 2/23, which extended the General Trust Fund established to promote its activities,

Stressing that monitoring water quality and quantity and sharing data are important for the effective management of water pollution and recalling the contributions of the Global Environment Monitoring System/Water Programme, which works with countries to build capacity to collect and share data on a voluntary basis,

Recognizing the contributions of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities and recalling its three partnerships, namely the Global Wastewater Initiative, the Global Partnership on Nutrient Management and the Global Partnership on Marine Litter,

Concerned about the limited legal, policy, financial, technical, technological and institutional capacities available to monitor, enforce and address water pollution in an integrated manner in many developing countries,

Recalling the fifth Global Environment Outlook report, *A Snapshot of the World's Water Quality: Towards a global assessment*, and the analytical brief entitled "Towards a Worldwide Assessment of Freshwater Quality", which highlight, inter alia, the gaps in our knowledge of the state of water quality resulting from a lack of data and regular monitoring, and the opportunities for avoiding pollution and restoring polluted water bodies in developing countries,

Taking into account the contribution that the United Nations Environment Programme can make upon request by concerned States to assist them in the protection and preservation of the terrestrial water resources and the marine and coastal environment,

Recalling Environment Assembly resolution 2/8 on sustainable consumption and production and noting the links to water quality and quantity,

Highlighting the need to enhance cooperation on water pollution as appropriate, including transboundary cooperation,

1. *Emphasizes* the need for member States, in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme and other United Nations entities, to address water pollution in inland, coastal and marine ecosystems and improve water quality by, inter alia, increasing efforts in pollution prevention at all levels, water governance at the national level, integrated water resources management, sustainable use of water, as appropriate, improved water quality data collection and improved data sharing on a voluntary basis, which should support implementation of the water-related Sustainable Development Goals and their interrelated targets and, as applicable, the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets, the fourth strategic plan 2016–2024 of the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat and the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030;

2. *Welcomes* the convening of the eighth session of the World Water Forum, to be held in Brasília from 18 to 23 March 2018, and encourages member States to participate in the event;

3. *Encourages* member States to draw upon the work carried out by the United Nations Environment Programme in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development on international water quality guidelines for ecosystems (now updated as "A Framework for Freshwater Ecosystem Management") in order to provide inputs for countries on how to protect and restore water-related ecosystems to create effective governance structures at the national level, develop their own national standards for water quality and set up water quality monitoring of their significant water bodies and associated ecosystems;

4. *Invites* member States to establish and improve water quality monitoring networks in voluntary collaboration with relevant organizations and monitoring systems, such as the Global Environment Monitoring System/Water Programme, to promote streamlined national standardized monitoring and reporting mechanisms in order to fill relevant data and information gaps and share data, as appropriate, to help in identifying and addressing sources and causes of water pollution in water bodies;

5. *Also invites* member States to enhance public access to relevant information on water quality status and requirements for different water uses to promote safe and efficient water use;

6. *Further invites* member States and other stakeholders, including government laboratories, the private sector, academia and civil society, to collaborate and share best practices with one another on data collection, monitoring and exchange that will be useful for reporting on water quality and quantity and addressing water pollution;

7. *Invites* member States, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, the private sector, industry, academia, civil society and the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities, including by encouraging platforms for wastewater and management of nutrients, to help in preventing and mitigating water pollution and to protect and restore water-related ecosystems in order to minimize adverse impacts on human health and the environment;

8. *Encourages* member States to facilitate the implementation of the target to halve by 2030 the amount of untreated wastewater reaching water bodies by continuing to work through the Global Wastewater Initiative and other UN-Water members and the private sector;

9. *Also encourages* member States, in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme and other UN-Water members and its partners, to develop and implement policies that relate to integrated water resources management and invest in the protection and restoration of water-related ecosystems, so as to prevent and reduce pollution and maintain or improve ecosystem health;

10. *Further encourages* member States to work collaboratively with the United Nations Environment Programme and other relevant international organizations, including the Global Environment Facility and multilateral banks, to mobilize the necessary resources to find solutions to land-based and water pollution;

11. *Encourages* member States, with the support of the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, to implement Environment Assembly resolution 2/8 on sustainable consumption and production patterns, including by integrating such patterns into education and training to promote a shift to sustainable consumption and production;

12. *Calls upon* member States:

(a) To increase transboundary water cooperation where appropriate to reduce water pollution;

(b) To improve their capacities to tackle accidental pollution risk at all levels;

(c) To strengthen their preparedness to address waterborne disease issues, especially after disasters and during communicable disease outbreaks by encouraging subnational, national and international initiatives dedicated to activities of surveillance, detection, notification and response to water-related public health emergencies;

13. *Reiterates* that the availability and accessibility of adequate, predictable and sustainable resource mobilization from all sources, technology development, dissemination, diffusion and transfer, on mutually agreed terms, and capacity-building are important to the effective prevention, reduction and management of water pollution;

14. *Encourages* member States to address water pollution, including through cooperation at all levels and partnerships with relevant stakeholders, as appropriate, to find solutions and strengthen cooperation and exchange knowledge, know-how and best practices;

15. *Stresses* the need to continue the dialogue at the United Nations level to discuss improving the integration and coordination of the work of the United Nations on the water-related Sustainable Development Goals and targets and further invites interested member States to consider using the work of relevant conventions, networks and other institutions to that end;

16. *Requests* the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, within available resources:

(a) To build upon, as needed, the Global Environment Monitoring System/Water Programme Trust Fund to assist developing countries, at their request and within available resources, in water quality monitoring, including by setting up monitoring stations, capacity-building and data management;

(b) To assist developing countries, upon their request, by strengthening their capacity to reach the target of halving by 2030 the amount of untreated wastewater reaching water bodies, taking into account gender perspectives, and including the development of wastewater treatment options in collaboration with national Governments, local authorities and, as appropriate, the private sector;

(c) To continue to develop tools to support countries, upon their request, in their efforts to address water pollution and ecosystem health, implement integrated water resources management approaches and address water-related impacts of disasters;

(d) To work with relevant international organizations, including through UN-Water, to address issues related to water pollution and build upon the 2016 report *A Snapshot of the World's Water Quality* and taking into account, where appropriate, the recommendations made by the analytical brief "Towards a Worldwide Assessment of Freshwater Quality", including assessments of invasive species, pharmaceutical contaminants, emerging pollutants and severe levels of pathogens in water bodies, and proposed solutions, policies and technologies;

(e) To cooperate with other relevant organizations, including through UN-Water, to develop a world water quality assessment for consideration by the Environment Assembly at its fifth session;

(f) To compile and share information on the analytical and technical requirements for water quality testing for contaminants (including new and emerging pollutants) that may impact human and environmental health;

(g) To support countries in data collection, analysis and sharing, at their request, which would support the implementation of the water-related Sustainable Development Goals, potentially drawing on Earth observations and global data;

(h) To provide the necessary technical support to facilitate monitoring and reporting on Sustainable Development Goal 6 on clean water and sanitation;

(i) To support member States, as appropriate, in developing programmes that invest in the management of land and ecosystems to prevent pollution of water sources in order to ensure the availability of quality water in a sustainable manner for all uses;

(j) To work with Governments and relevant stakeholders, including the private sector, in creating an enabling environment for addressing water pollution, including sustainable wastewater management, which encompasses supportive policies, legislation and regulations, tailored technologies and innovative financial mechanisms;

(k) To assist developing countries, upon their request and within the mandate of the United Nations Environment Programme, in cleaning and recovering polluted water bodies;

17. *Also requests* the Executive Director to report to the United Nations Environment Assembly at its fourth session on the implementation of the present resolution.